§ 12.27 Termination of consideration of pleadings.

If the Director of the Office of Proceedings should determine not to proceed in a manner set forth in § 12.26 (a), (b), or (c), consideration of the complaint and the answer (and reply, if any) shall terminate, and no proceeding shall be held on the allegations in any such pleadings. Such termination shall be regarded by the Commission as without prejudice to the right of the parties to seek such alternative forms of relief as may be available to them. If the consideration of the pleadings should be terminated, the Proceedings Clerk shall immediately notify the parties to that effect by registered or certified mail. A determination by the Director not to proceed in the manner set forth in § 12.26 (a), (b), or (c) of these rules is not subject to appeal pursuant to subpart F of these rules.

Subpart B—Discovery

§ 12.30 Methods of discovery.

(a) *In general.* Parties may obtain discovery by the following methods in accordance with the procedures and limitations set forth in the section indicated:

(1) Production of documents or other items (§ 12.31);

(2) Deposition on written interrogatories (§ 12.32);

(3) Admissions (§ 12.33).

(b) *Scope of discovery.* The scope of discovery is as follows:

(1) *Relevancy.* Except as provided below, discovery may be obtained regarding any matter not privileged, which is relevant to the subject matter in the pending proceeding, including the existence, description, nature, custody, condition and location of any books, documents, or other tangible items, and the identity and location of persons having knowledge of any discoverable matters. Tax returns and personal bank account records shall not be discoverable, except upon motion by the party seeking discovery showing the need for disclosure of information contained therein, and that the same information could not be obtained through other means.

(2) *Protective orders.* Upon motion by a party or the person from whom discov-

ery is sought, filed within twenty days after the objectionable discovery notice or request is served, and for good cause shown, the official presiding over discovery may issue any order to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense, or to prevent the raising of issues untimely or inappropriate to the proceeding, or the inappropriate disclosure of trade secrets or sensitive commercial or financial information. Relief through a protective order may include one or more of the following:

(i) That discovery not be had;

(ii) That discovery may be had only on specified terms and conditions;

(iii) That certain matters not be inquired into, or that the scope of the discovery be limited to certain matters;

(iv) That a trade secret or other confidential commercial information not be disclosed or be disclosed only in a designated way; and

(v) That the parties simultaniously file specified documents or information in sealed envelopes to be opened only as directed by the decisionmaking official.

(3) *Motions for order compelling discovery.* It shall be the duty of a party to obtain an order compelling discovery from another party if the latter party fails to comply with a discovery notice, by filing a motion therefor within twenty days after the time allowed by these rules for compliance with the notice has expired.

(c) *Sanctions for abuse of discovery.* If an Administrative Law Judge or a Judgement Officer finds that any party, without substanial justification, has necessitated the filing of a motion for a protective order or for an order compelling discovery, or any other discovery-related motions, that party shall, if the motion is granted, be ordered to pay, at the termination of the proceeding, the reasonable expenses of the moving party incurred in filing the motion, unless the decisionmaking official finds that circumstances exist which would make an award of such expenses unjust. If a decisionmaking official finds that any party, without substantial justification, has filed a motion for a protective order or for an